

**PRELIMINARY WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS
ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION
BLM MONTICELLO FIELD OFFICE**

1.0 Introduction – Wild and Scenic Rivers

Through the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) of 1968, Congress established legislation to protect and preserve designated rivers throughout the United States in their free-flowing condition. Section 5(d) of the WSRA directs federal agencies to consider the potential for national wild, scenic, and recreational river areas in all planning. A Wild and Scenic River review is, therefore, being conducted as part of the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Monticello (Utah) Field Office, as mandated by the State of Utah BLM.

1.1 Wild and Scenic River Act (WSRA)

The Wild and Scenic River Act of 1968 (Section 5(d)) specifies that an evaluation of the current status of watercourses within federal jurisdictions be completed by federal agencies to determine eligibility for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System NWSRS. The process requires, first, an inventory of all river areas, a determination of free-flowing nature, and consideration of any Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) that are river-related and regionally and/or nationally significant. A Tentative Classification of each river/segment found eligible is then made based on the current level of human development associated with the river/segment.

Public input is solicited at specific points in the eligibility process and incorporated into the study. Finally, when eligible sections have been determined, analyzed and tentatively classified Wild, Scenic or Recreational, the evaluation passes to the second, Suitability, phase for continued study and public involvement. The Suitability phase is embedded within the RMP process Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); ‘suitability’ determinations will be made in the Record of Decision (ROD) for the EIS within the Resource Management Plan process.

Those river(s)/segments found Suitable are then managed under specified guidelines to protect the free-flowing nature of the river(s)/segment, and to protect the identified Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs).

Finally, the Suitable river/segment determinations are reported to Congress. There is no specific time requirement for the completion of this phase; however, it is assumed that reporting will be done some time following completion of the Resource Management Plan. Only Congress or the Secretary of the Interior, upon request by the State, can designate a river in to the NWSRS.

1.2 History of Wild and Scenic River Process – BLM Monticello Field Office

On January, 25, 1991, an Addendum to the San Juan [Resource Area] Management Situation Analysis, 4333 Recreation Management clarifying the status of the Monticello Field Office's Wild and Scenic River planning process was written by the Monticello Field Office:

“At the time the San Juan Management Situation Analysis (MSA) was written (1984-1985), BLM guidance for wild and scenic river eligibility was to consider only those rivers identified in the 1982 Nationwide Rivers Inventory. These included the Colorado River, San Juan River, and White Canyon. These three river segments were the only rivers considered for eligibility and (were) included in the RMP process. The analysis of these rivers was printed in Appendix DD of the September 1987 Proposed Resource Management Plan”. (These original findings are available at the Monticello Field Office, Wild and Scenic River References).

“The 1970 USDA/USDI list of rivers did not list any rivers in Utah. Neither the public nor the State of Utah identified any river as potentially eligible for Wild and Scenic designation during the planning process up until the protest period. During the protest period on the RMP, American Rivers suggested several other rivers as candidates for study as potential wild and scenic rivers. These included Indian Creek, Dark Canyon, Red Canyon, Cedar Canyon, Moki Canyon, Grand Gulch, Comb Wash, and Montezuma Canyon.

“After the San Juan FEIS was completed, new BLM guidance stated all rivers in San Juan Resource Area would be evaluated for wild and scenic river status in the RMP. Since the RMP was already in the final stages of completion, it was decided to finalize the RMP without consideration of additional rivers. It was recognized that additional planning would be needed to evaluate the other rivers under the wild and scenic rivers program. Suitability of the original three eligible river segments, as well as any additional rivers determined eligible, will be considered in a future plan amendment.”

The Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision, dated March 1991, included interim management guidelines for “portions of the San Juan and Colorado Rivers, and the White Canyon drainage” under the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. (RMP, March 1991, pp. 98-1)

On May 24, 1991, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to plan was published in the Federal Register (Vol. 56, No. 101):

“[UT-062-4333-12] San Juan and San Rafael Resource Areas, Utah; Intent to Conduct Further Planning. AGENCY: BLM, Interior. ACTION: Notice of Intent to do further planning within the San Juan and San Rafael Resource Areas,

Utah, for consideration of potential additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and call for public nomination of eligible river segments.”

In April 1992 the Monticello Field Office (then identified as the San Juan Resource Area) completed its preliminary inventory and assessment of the rivers within its jurisdiction, the San Juan Resource Area of southeastern Utah. The WSR inventory, eligibility determination, and tentative classification process included public input suggestions, Utah rivers listed in Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI), American Rivers List, USDA/USDI lists, and professional input from subject matter specialists in the Monticello Field Office. Of the 164 studied watercourses, 16 were recommended for eligibility and further consideration for wild and scenic river designation. (See Appendix 7.1, Table WS).

Following the completion of the WSR eligibility and tentative classification phase, the State BLM office indicated that any then current or future wild and scenic river planning would have to be included within the next scheduled Resource Management Plan. “In the future all Districts in the State (Utah) are to make suitability determinations in the RMPs.” Therefore, a hold was placed on further WSR evaluation or processing. (Instructions Memorandum No. UT 91-315, Wild and Scenic River Suitability Determination in RMPs.)

The Notice of Intent (NOI) for the current RMP was published June 4, 2003 in the Federal Register Vol. 68, No. 107. [UT 060-1610-DO-016J, UT 090-1610-DO-017J]. A news release, specifically stating intent to include wild and scenic rivers in the planning process, was published in the local newspaper, the San Juan Record, June 25, 2003.

The current (2003) WSR eligibility determination process begins where the 1991-1992 process stopped. The April 1992 WS Table (See Appendix 7.1) provided the starting point for current evaluation of river(s)/segments based on current guidelines described herein. The Monticello Field Office drainages are mapped at a 1:100,000 scale with the 16 river(s)/segments found eligible in 1992 delineated on five overlapping area resource maps. These were used as the basis for the current wild and scenic river evaluation process.